THE AMUSEMENT HALL

The Town Hall, which is now a cannery, was built in the early days by a group of five townsmen, instigated by Moroni Gerber.

An excerpt from the journel of Moroni Gerber who moved here as a small boy in the 1860's with his family. His father was a Swiss doctor. Moroni was living in Midway in 1894 and he tells us the following:

"Some time in the late fall of 1894 or 95, the Primary arranged for a children's dance to be given in the Van Wagoner Hall. Accordingly, I took my children in the wagon to town, and, to my surprise and disgust, I found the primary children very much disappointed. The hall had been rented to a travelling troop, and it was being arranged for a play of some kind. In talking with a number of parents and the President of the Primary, I told them to submit to the abuse and not make any trouble for the management of the play. I further said that we would have a hall of our own by another year.

This statement I soon forgot, but I was reminded of it the next February by Charles Bronson who called my attention to it. He asked me when we were going to start to build the hall. It was a surprise to me, having thought no more of my past remark. He said the boys were ready to go. All they lacked was a building leader. He further stated that I'd have plenty of support if I'd go ahead. I immediately proposed a meeting for the following evening to select a building committee. I was delighted to have about thirty of the leading young men present, anxious to go ahead and build the hall.

Geo. Bonner, Jr., presented the building spot, and a committee of five was appointed, myself being one of the number. This committee met and decided on building the hall of pot rock and also set the date to begin, Monday, February 22. Through misunderstanding of the date, only one man was out to haul rock, yet he hauled the full day. This man was Everice Bronson. The next day there were plenty of teams and single hands to do the work. There were about two feet of snow on the ground.

The site which was staked off was cleared of snow preparatory to digging the foundation. We decided to build the hall 80 feet long, 50 feet wide and 16 feet ot the square. We excavated the place for a foundation and basement, this last being 20 X 50 ft. The labor for the entire building was performed by local men taking their pay in shares in the corporation. The hall was completed, and the opening dance held the following Xmas eve. From that time until the present, the children of Midway have had a free hall for amusement."

p. 85 of Journal of Moroni Gerber.

The Amusement Hall, as it was called later, was originally called the "Midway Opera House". It had a beautiful rolled curtain with a scene of Venice painted on it. There was a huge roller on the bottom that cranked up and raised the curtain. When a scene was ended, they just released the catch and the roller unrolled and let the curtain fall to the floor. Many dances, as well as operas and plays by local talent, were held there.

In this old dance hall, "toe" parties, "bow" parties, and box suppers were held. All the teenagers would go with their parents and have a wonderful time. At intermission they would raffle off, auction off, or vote for the various boxes of lunch the women had provided. The men paid the fiddler and the women provided the refreshments. Many a time the young boys ended up eating dinner with grandmothers because they'd vote on her lunch not knowing who had made the box. Sometimes they'd have the women stand behind a sheet with a bare foot sticking out. One could pick out his partner by the identification of her feet! Whoever a fellow chose by this indentification he had supper with. Sometimes during intermissions, if the people who got together for their lunch lived close to the hall, they would go to their homes to eat their lunch, and then back to the hall to finish the dance.

Floyd Bonner, whose uncle was George Bonner, Jr. tells us of the use of the "Town Hall".

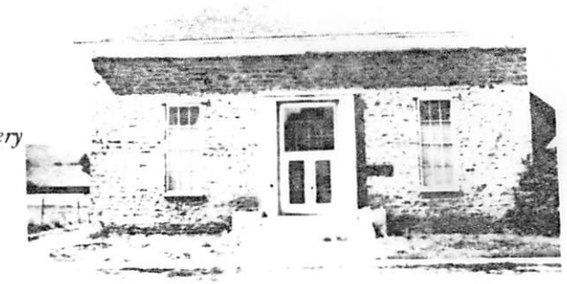
"Memories that are the most vivid for me as a child were those of July 4th and 24th. The day began with cannonading, at daylight followed by the Martial Band which went all around the town. Many of the residents would bring them out refreshments as they went along, and they would stop and visit a few minutes.

The parade came next followed by a lengthy patriotic program. This was held in the Amusement Hall, what is now the Stake Welfare Building. It was decorated gaily with yards and yards of red, white and blue bunting and many flags. The program always included patriotic speeches, songs, and readings. It always concluded with a patriotic drill using most of the young people carrying flags. It took many practices to get it perfect.

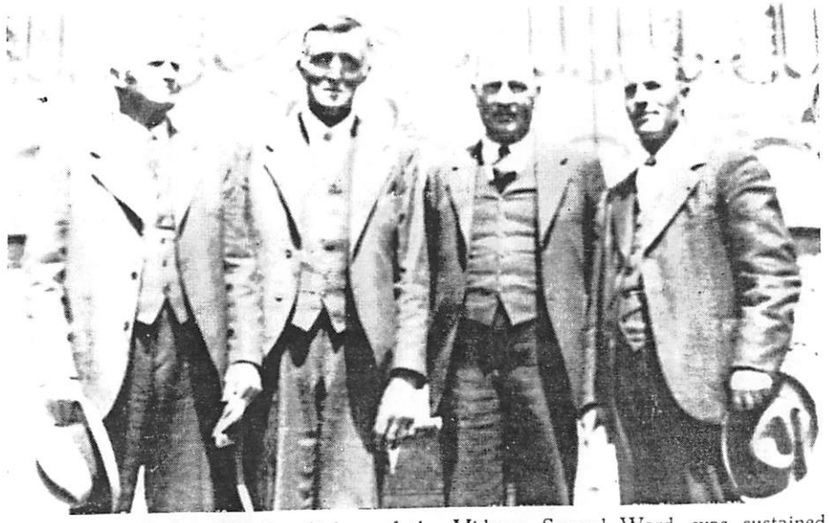
In the afternoon there was always a children's dance and ball game which everyone enjoyed and went to cheer along their team. In the evening a dance was held in the Amusement Hall and mothers of young children brought them with blankets and made beds up on the stage where they could sleep while Mom and Dad enjoyed an evening of dancing."

This hall was later operated by the L.D.S. Church as a stake cannery. People were able to take their produce in the fall and their meat after hunting, to this cannery, and by preparing the food, have it processed through the mechanical operations of the cannery which was quite modern. There were sealers, steam cookers, and all the other apparatus necessary to provide an efficient cannery operation.

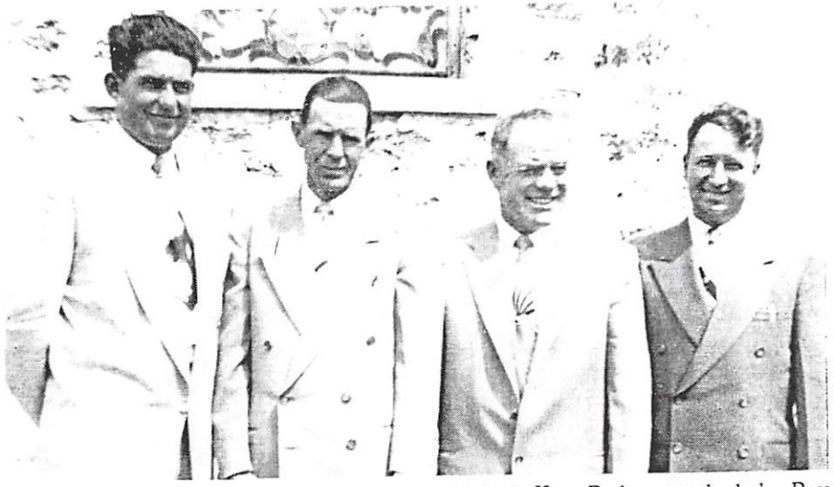
It is at the present time not in operation.



The Amusement Hall/Cannery

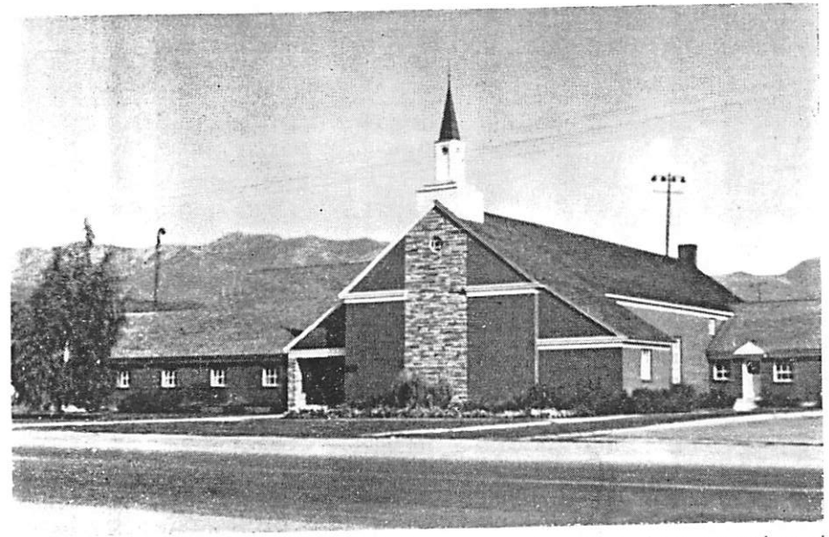


Bishop Jacob Probst left, first bishop of the Midway Second Ward, was sustained February 8, 1903. Counselors and clerk serving with him at the time of his release on Sept. 1, 1935, were Fredrick Hasler, John Carroll and August Kohler.



Midway Second Ward Bishopric presently serving. Kay Probst, ward clerk; Ray Gertsch, first counselor; Bishop Elmer Kohler and Wilburn Huffaker, second counselor.

1885, which became the recreation hall of the new chapel, adding many more rooms and improvements. After 16½ months of diligent work—serving of dinners, bazaars, programs, etc.—the building was dedicated July 16, 1956 at a total cost of $112,500.00. The completion of this great project in so short a time was due to the untiring efforts of Bishop Kohler who worked on the project every day. The unity and support of the people were very commendable and now a beautiful chapel stands as a monument to their efforts.



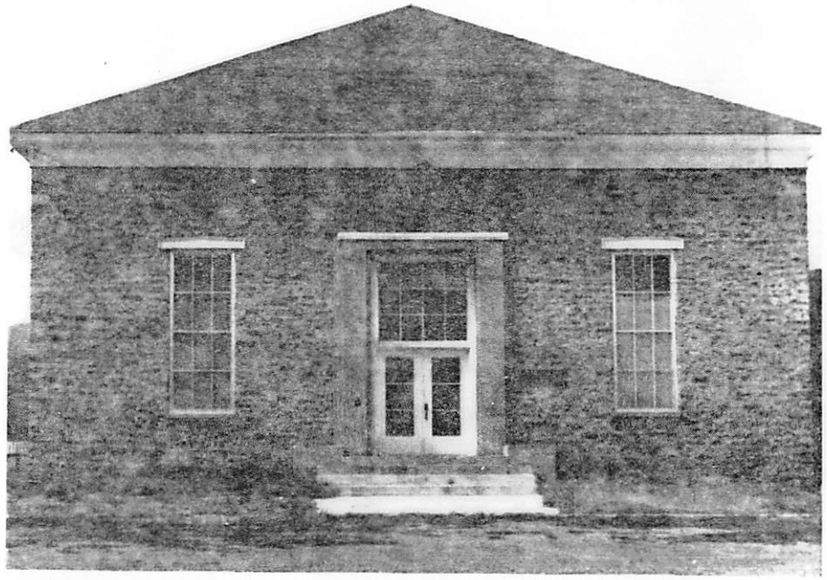
The Midway Second Ward Chapel, which incorporated portions of the original ward building. The remodeled and enlarged structure was completed in 16½ months of work and dedicated July 16, 1956.

THE WELFARE PROGRAM

About 1898 George Bonner, one of the early settlers decided a building was needed for amusements. Such building was constructed of native rock, had a stage for dramas, plays and concerts. It was heated by two potbellied stoves. It had a very fine floor for dancing. The walls echoed with laughter, and fine times were had dancing the Quadrille, the polka, and waltz. Midway had a good orchestra, and people came from far and near to enjoy the fun.

Later the Church purchased the building from Mr. Bonner, and it was used for amusements under supervision of an Amusement Committee until the erection of the Town Hall.

During the depression of the 1930's the leaders of the Church could see the necessity of some kind of a program to help people in times of dire need such as sickness, accident, work stoppage, or strikes, to say



The Wasatch Stake Welfare Center, where commodities are stored for the Church Welfare Program and where many stake welfare projects such as canning are carried out.

nothing of war or crop failures which might make it impossible to obtain food or clothing. After careful consideration and study, the Welfare Program was outlined by the Church. It is carried on in the wards under the direction of the bishoprics and representatives from the Relief Society and quorums.

Under this plan each family is asked to store enough food and clothing to last a year. The surplus to be stored in a central storage house.

The Stake Presidency and bishoprics of Wasatch County decided to use the old amusement hall which had been idle for several years and use it for canning and a place of storage for Wasatch Stake.

It was therefore renovated to fit the needs of the people, a new heating system was installed along with boilers, etc., for canning purposes and places built for storage. It is equipped and modern in every way to carry out the Lord's plan of Church Welfare.

Wasatch Stake also owns a very modern up-to-date dairy farm. As there is not sufficient hay raised for the number of cows, each ward has to contribute hay and grain. For this reason the Midway First Ward purchased 32 acres of farming ground from Floyd Bonner where their share of hay and grain are produced. The Midway 2nd Ward leases ground each year for the same purpose.

Midway Amusement Hall

AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS OF MIDWAY

THE RELIEF SOCIETY

The first organization of ladies in Midway was formed October 25, 1869 and was known as the Ladies' Industrial Society. Mary Jane Robey Epperson was the president, with Sarah Wood as first counselor and Mary Bonner, second counselor. This group became the first Relief Society organization on January 29, 1870, under the direction of Bishop Abram Hatch.

Chosen as president of the new Relief Society organization was Mary Jane R. Epperson. Counselors were Sarah H. Alexander and Julia Van Wagoner, with Mary Jane Coleman as secretary and Sarah Wood, treasurer. On April 10, 1870 Mrs. Epperson was released and Mary Bronson was sustained as president.

Between 1871 and 1876 the Relief Society was reorganized with Esther Dabling as president, Sarah Alexander, first counselor and Elizabeth Alexander, secretary-treasurer. These officers served until November 30, 1876 when Mary McOlney was sustained as president with Sarah Alexander and Maggie Cunningham as counselors and Mary Jane McCarrell, secretary and Cynthia Wootton, treasurer. New counselors were sustained on January 8, 1878, and were Charlotte Gurney and Mary Gerber, Matilda Jacobs was secretary.

Another reorganization was effected on November 27, 1879 when Charlotte Gurney became president, with Mary Gerber and Margaret Watkins as counselors and Mary Bronson, secretary. Sustained as new counselors on November 25, 1880 were Cynthia Wootton and Mary Ann Watkins. Mary Bronson was released as secretary in January, 1883, and Emily A. Gerber was appointed, with Lucretia H. Coleman, assistant secretary. Others who served as secretary or assistant secretaries until the reorganization in 1895 were Ella Hamilton, Elizabeth Wintch, Mary A. Watkins, Elinor Watkins and Martha Bronson.

The next reorganization took place on June 13, 1895 when Mary Ann Watkins was sustained as president. Cynthia Wootton became first counselor and Mary Jane McCarrell second counselor. Elizabeth Wintch was secretary and Martha A. Bronson, assistant secretary.

Shortly after this reorganization the Relief Society sisters were asked by Church leaders to direct a wheat storage program. At first the wheat came in by donations. Then the Relief Society began a system of loaning wheat in the spring to people who needed it for seed, and then receiving the wheat back in the fall with one peck per bushel as interest. This increased the storage program and made large quantities of wheat available when it was badly needed by the government during World War I. Midway Ward joined with Relief Society groups throughout the Church in turning over wheat to the United States for emergency use.

When Midway Ward was divided in February, 1903 it was decided